



THE FOREIGN SERVICE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

United States Mission Berlin,  
Berlin, Germany,  
October 20, 1959.

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Dear Martin:

On the eve of another round of talks on Berlin you and others in EUR (and maybe even Bob Murphy, if current rumors are true) may be interested in a round-up of some of the points that Willy Brandt has been emphasizing in recent conversations about the Berlin problem. We have reported much of this, but piecemeal, so it may be useful for you to have this compilation. George Muller and/or myself have been present on most of the occasions at which the Mayor has expressed his views on these matters to visiting American VIPs and I was acting U. S. Commandant at the September meeting with Brandt when he gave the Commandants his reactions to the Camp David talks. I mention this to emphasize that this summary is not based on hearsay or a single conversation but is a synthesis of a consistent position that Brandt has literally been pounding home on every possible occasion.

Of course, Brandt does not talk this way in public. He himself explained to the Atlantic Bridge group on October 5 in reply to a direct question the basis for his decisions on what to say or not say in public. He stressed the absolute necessity of maintaining a public position of 100% confidence in the Western Allies and Federal Republic, a position of complete optimism, no matter what happened. For the Mayor of Berlin to do otherwise would be unthinkable and unforgiveable. On the other hand, as a thinking man and observer of the scene, he admitted he had certain qualms about the future handling of the Berlin problem by the United States and its Allies. He felt it was his obligation to express these fears to influential visitors on a background basis in the hope that this would have a constructive result. Observing some of Brandt's more recent public utterances, e.g., on RIAS October 18 and in Zurich October 19, I note he

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1) to Hillenbrand (you may be interested in meeting in US Mission Berlin)  
2) returns. INH  
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is more and more forthright in expressing his belief that the status quo for Berlin is far less dangerous than a short-sighted "solution".

Before outlining Brandt's personal views, let me first review briefly the general reaction to the Camp David discussions in Berlin political circles. In the first place, concern has been felt that Khrushchev was successful in convincing the President that it is essential to world peace to find a solution to the Berlin problem and that progress toward a general relaxation of tensions and a possible solution of the disarmament question should be preceded by an understanding on Berlin. Among Berliners this is putting the cart before the horse, as the Berlin situation is not a cause but the result of international tensions. It also presents the hazard that the Berlin problem will be dealt with as an isolated question, apart from the problem of German reunification which provides the basic justification for continued Allied occupation.

Secondly, Berlin leaders were puzzled and somewhat upset when it became clear that further negotiations on Berlin will take place quite soon. Politically informed circles around town had rather assumed that the promise of a Summit Meeting would be enough for Khrushchev to desist from his demand for immediately tackling the Berlin problem and that there would be an unwritten East-West truce on Berlin at least for the duration of the Summit Meeting and the Eisenhower return visit.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, Berlin political circles are concerned about what they feel is a difficult-to-define change in United States official thinking on Berlin and Germany. They fear that recent statements by the President, the Secretary and Congressional leaders, such as Senators Mansfield and Symington, are evidence of a trend in American thinking that cannot be explained away by any of the subsequent statements that our policy has not been changed.

Mayor Brandt, in line with the foregoing general pattern of thinking, has been stressing the following points:

While the Camp David discussions have dispelled fears of an immediate threat against Berlin, the Soviets have not changed their basic position and still demand that the Berlin problem be "solved" by turning West Berlin into a "free city". Although Khrushchev has agreed that there will be no time limit on the negotiations about Berlin, the President has agreed that the negotiations will not be protracted indefinitely; Brandt therefore fears that the notion may gain ground among the Western Powers that a "solution", acceptable to all, must be found. He points out that in their efforts to find such a solution the Western Powers may place upon themselves a new time limit and may find that they then labor under a kind of "self-imposed ultimatum". Moreover, Brandt believes that further negotiations concerning the future of Berlin would have to pick up where Geneva left off, i.e., with the June 16, 1959 paper. This paper was never very popular with the Berliners because, from their point of view, it embodied two dangerous points: (1) possible limitations on the number of Western troops to be stationed in Berlin; (2) possible limitations on information activities in West Berlin.

Brandt ...

Brandt characterizes a Berlin "solution" based on the paper of June 16 as the "status quo minus". What he fears even more is that negotiations having the June 16 paper as their point of departure will go beyond that paper and produce further compromises, leading to a situation Brandt characterizes as a "status quo minus, minus". He feels strongly that it should be the aim of Western policy to retain the status quo for Berlin; if the East is given a legal or other basis for further chipping away at the foundations of West Berlin, disastrous long-range consequences are bound to follow. Brandt privately confesses that Berlin might be able to survive a "status quo minus" situation but could not survive a "minus minus" one.

In discussing these matters further, Brandt professes to believe it may even be possible to improve certain aspects of the present situation as regards various technical aspects of Berlin's lines of communications with the Federal Republic. In this connection, he has stated repeatedly that the Western negotiators should not shy away from these complex and highly technical questions; in dealing with the Soviets and the East Germans, both of whom are obviously bent on exploiting every weakness and technicality, a reaffirmation of the principle of free communications is not enough; a very concise spelling out of technical details is required. He realizes that it may not be practical at the Foreign Ministers' level to negotiate in such detail but he does feel that if the importance of detailed agreements is fully appreciated at that high level, it should be possible to get some suitable supplementary negotiating body to work out the details, that can later be approved at the top level.

Brandt believes that East-West German transportation and communications problems will from time to time have to be discussed at a technical level anyway and he cites the recent letter from East German Minister of Transportation Kramer to Minister Seeborn as evidence thereof. He believes that Berlin's civilian access problems can be settled within such an overall framework. In this connection, Brandt is of the opinion that the West has failed to play an important card by neglecting to hold the Soviets to the 1949 Paris agreement, which not only reaffirmed the Jessup-Malik agreement terminating the blockade but in which the Soviets also pledged themselves to examine the possibility of improving West Berlin's communications. (When Clare Timberlake called on the Mayor on October 8, Brandt mentioned that he was rather shocked when Couve told him that the 1949 agreements related only to military access; Brandt argues that since Berlin had relatively free civilian communications prior to the blockade, the 1949 agreements restoring the status quo ante clearly also included civilian communications.)

In attempting to improve West Berlin's communications, the Western technical experts, according to Brandt, hold two cards in addition to the Soviet pledge of 1949: (1) an overall settlement of the various toll charges now being paid to the East Germans involving a lump annual payment by the Federal Republic might have a certain attraction for them and (2) the fact that the threat of seizing installations now under East German control located in West Berlin (such as the S-Bahn and the two canal locks) might give us

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some leverage. Brandt's technical experts have advised him that the seizure of the canal locks would be a particular irritant, as the East German circumferential canal is incapable of handling the necessary traffic. A seizure of the S-Bahn line in West Berlin may not be as serious a threat because alternate rail transportation is available to the East Germans, but as Brandt said, "they certainly wouldn't like it."

Another reason for taking up these communications problems, Brandt feels, is that we will have to face them soon anyway when a separate peace treaty between the USSR and the GDR is signed. The Mayor believes we must be prepared for such a step on the part of the USSR at any time. Such a document might not be called a "peace treaty" but might merely be a "peace treaty-like" instrument.

Brandt has never clarified what compelling factors, other than those mentioned above, might induce the East Germans or the Soviets to agree to improve access to West Berlin. He has pointed out, however, that even if technical negotiations produced meager results, the very fact that they would consume a considerable amount of time, perhaps a year, would be an advantage to the West. This gets back to his basic thesis that the longer the status quo can be preserved, the better; time gained will give West Berlin further opportunity to continue its reconstruction and peaceful development. This in itself tends to disprove in concrete terms Khrushchev's assertion that West Berlin is a threat to world peace. In line with this long term approach, Brandt has been stressing lately his rather vague scheme to do everything possible to make West Berlin the cultural center of Germany.

Referring back to Brandt's wariness with respect to the forthcoming negotiations on Berlin, and to his mistrust of the self-imposed Western mandate to find a solution within a reasonable period of time, he sees a danger that the Soviets and East Germans may have some success in concentrating their efforts on severing the financial ties between the Federal Republic and West Berlin. Clearly German and international confidence in the future of this city would erode very quickly if West Berlin were to be excluded from the area of the DM West.

Brandt frequently elucidates on this point to visitors, stressing the vital importance to the preservation of free Berlin of its being part of the DM area and the disastrous consequences of any measures that would establish monetary ties with the East Zone. His quick public rejoinder to the latest Ulbricht suggestion for a Vatican-type solution for Berlin (allegedly based on a Walter Lippmann column) was a reflection of his sensitivity to any ideas that would be moves toward incorporation of Western Berlin within the DM-East currency area, or toward a separate "Free City" currency.

These are the main points on which Brandt has been hammering in conversations with distinguished visitors, with the Commandants, and with

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members of the Senat. His views undoubtedly contribute heavily to the shaping of opinions around this town. As you know, he speaks with the appearance of great sincerity and forcefulness and is therefore pretty convincing. You may be sure that we in USBER do our best to maintain an attitude of confidence that the United States under no circumstances will be a party to an agreement that might contain within it the hidden seeds of erosion. However, we would appreciate your keeping in mind our continuing need for every bit of evidence we can get to bolster this confidence.

Sincerely,

*Allan*

E. Allan Lightner, Jr.

Copy to: Ambassador Bruce  
Mr. Tyler